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ACTION H-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3782  
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 002109

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SUBJECT: CODEL HOLLINGS' MEETINGS WITH VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. SENATOR ERNEST HOLLINGS (D-SC) LED A DELEGATION TO HANOI AUGUST 17-19, INCLUDING MRS. HOLLINGS; LILA HELM, STAFF DIRECTOR, APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, COMMERCE AND THE JUDICIARY; BETTY PITERMAN, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT; AND US ARMY ESCORT OFFICER COL. TIM PETERSON. IN MEETINGS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY (MFA) AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NA), THE CODEL WAS ABLE TO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ALREADY GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND VIETNAM, ASSURE THE VIETNAMESE THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS WOULD RATIFY THE BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT (BTA) SOON, AND REQUEST ASSISTANCE IN  
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SEEKING A SITE FOR A NEW U.S. CHANCERY. THE CODEL ALSO MET WITH THE EMBASSY COUNTRY TEAM, AND ATTENDED A DINNER IN ITS HONOR HOSTED BY THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. END SUMMARY.

FOREIGN MINISTRY  
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2. (SBU) THE DELEGATION MET ON AUGUST 17 WITH VICE FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN VAN NGANH. (NOTE: SENIOR VFM BINH WHO COVERS AMERICAS ISSUES AND WHO NORMALLY MEETS AMERICAN VIPS WAS TRAVELLING IN CUBA. MOST OTHER SENIOR LEADERS WERE INVOLVED WITH THE ONGOING CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM SESSIONS. END NOTE) ALSO PARTICIPATING WERE ASSISTANT FOREIGN MINISTER LE VAN BANG (FORMER VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON), AMERICAS DESK DEPUTY DIRECTOR DOAN XUAN HUNG, AMERICAS DESK SENIOR EXPERT PHAM HOANG KIM, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES HARTER, POL/C BELLARD, AND EMBASSY INTERPRETER THANH VUONG.

3. (SBU) VFM NGANH DESCRIBED VIETNAM'S POLICY OF ECONOMIC RENOVATION ("DOI MOI") SINCE 1986 AND ITS CONSISTENT FOREIGN POLICY IN SUPPORT OF INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY, DIVERSIFICATION, MULTI-FACETIZATION, AND INTEGRATION INTO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. HE CONFIRMED THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE US BASED ALSO ON EQUALITY AND MUTUAL BENEFIT, WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE REGION AND WORLD. HE WELCOMED RECENT POSITIVE STEPS IN CONGRESS ON THE BTA AS WELL AS THE JACKSON-VANICK WAIVER, DESPITE SOME PROPOSED ANTI-VIETNAM BILLS AND DRAFT RESOLUTIONS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WHICH WERE NOT  
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IN THE INTEREST OF EITHER COUNTRY AND WHICH HAD UPSET MANY VIETNAMESE. HE DESCRIBED PREPARATIONS ON THE VIETNAMESE SIDE FOR BTA RATIFICATION. THE TRADE MINISTER HAD ALREADY SUBMITTED A REPORT ON THE BTA TO THE NA, WHILE THE PRIME MINISTER HAD SUBMITTED IT TO THE STATE PRESIDENT FOR CONSIDERATION. THE STATE PRESIDENT IS EXPECTED FORMALLY TO REQUEST THE NA TO RATIFY. HE THANKED SENATOR HOLLINGS FOR HIS GREAT CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPRESSED A HOPE FOR EARLY RATIFICATION. HE ADDED THAT THE SENATOR'S VISIT WOULD ADD TO A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING IN THE CONGRESS OF THE POSITIVE CHANGES AND REALITIES IN VIETNAM TODAY.

4. (SBU) SENATOR HOLLINGS TOLD THE VFM THAT HE EXPECTED FAVORABLE VOTES ON THE BTA BY BOTH THE SENATE AND HOUSE SHORTLY AFTER LABOR DAY, WITH RATIFICATION COMPLETED BY THE END OF NOVEMBER. HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT RATIFICATION WOULD HELP AMERICAN INVESTORS UNDERSTAND BETTER THE POLICY OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES AND WOULD LED TO MORE US INVESTMENT HERE. HE WELCOMED VIETNAMESE INVESTORS TO COME

TO SOUTH CAROLINA.

15. (U) SENATOR HOLLINGS SAID THAT ONE OF HIS PRIMARY REASONS FOR COMING TO HANOI WAS TO LOOK AT THE NEED FOR NEW FACILITIES FOR THE US EMBASSY. VFM NGANH PROMISED THAT THE MFA WOULD COORDINATE WITH RELEVANT AUTHORITIES IN SEEKING A SUITABLE PLACE, NOTING THAT THE VIETNAMESE SIDE HAD OFFERED SEVERAL SITES TO WHICH THE US HAD NOT AGREED. HE REQUESTED SIMILAR COOPERATION FROM THE US IN FINDING A NEW EMBASSY SITE IN WASHINGTON FOR VIETNAM. SENATOR HOLLINGS SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT THE TWO SIDES COULD MOVE FORWARD ON THE SITE ISSUE, AND NOTED THAT SECRETARY POWELL HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY  
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HANOI DURING HIS VISIT IN JULY.

16. (U) SENATOR HOLLINGS ALSO POINTED TO HIS EXPECTED ATTENDANCE AT A CATHOLIC MASS ON AUGUST 18 AS EVIDENCE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN VIETNAM.

17. (U) AFM BANG SAID THAT RECENT VISITS BY SECRETARY POWELL AND A/S CRANER HAD HELPED FURTHER IMPROVE BILATERAL RELATIONS, AND THAT VIETNAM WANTED MORE HIGH-RANKING VISITORS FROM THE US. HE ADDED THAT FM NGUYEN DY NIEN WOULD VISIT WASHINGTON IN SEPTEMBER.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
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18. (U) ON AUGUST 18, THE DELEGATION MET WITH MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, INCLUDING DO VAN TAI, CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE; VU MINH MAO, VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND ENVIRONMENT; NGUYEN VAN PHUC, DIRECTOR OF THE ECONOMIC AND BUDGETARY DEPARTMENT; TRINH DINH SON, STAFF MEMBER OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE; AND DOAN XUAN HUNG OF THE MFA'S AMERICAS DESK. CHAIRMAN TAI ALSO HOSTED A LUNCH IN HONOR OF SENATOR AND MRS. HOLLINGS.

19. (U) CHAIRMAN TAI HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF VISITS, ESPECIALLY BY MEMBERS OF THE U.S. SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, IN FURTHER DEVELOPING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. NOTING THAT IT WAS HIS FIRST VISIT TO HANOI, SENATOR HOLLINGS DESCRIBED HIS AMAZEMENT AT THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY AND DYNAMISM. HE CITED HIS DISCUSSIONS ON  
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AUGUST 17 WITH MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND SAID HE LOOKED FORWARD TO INCREASED US INVESTMENT IN VIETNAM. HE EXPECTED A FAVORABLE VOTE ON BTA BY THE HOUSE SHORTLY AFTER LABOR DAY, WITH A FAVORABLE VOTE IN THE SENATE IN SEPTEMBER OR EARLY OCTOBER. HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT RATIFICATION WOULD BE A SIGNAL OF THE FRIENDSHIP AND STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS, NOTING IN PARTICULAR GOOD COOPERATION ON HEALTH ISSUES, DRUGS, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT.

110. (SBU) SENATOR HOLLINGS REQUESTED HELP FROM THE NA IN FINDING A NEW EMBASSY SITE IN HANOI. CHAIRMAN TAI PROMISED TO TELL THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS REQUEST. HE DISCUSSED THE DEVELOPMENT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND SOUGHT FURTHER ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND TRADE RELATIONS. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS PROCESS BY BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS AS WELL AS BY THE US EMBASSY AND AMBASSADOR PETERSON AND CHARGE HARTER. HE ASKED FOR SENATOR HOLLINGS' SUPPORT FOR BTA RATIFICATION IN THE SENATE, NOTING THAT IMPROVEMENT IN TRADE WOULD SPARK FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN OTHER ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP. EARLY RATIFICATION WOULD BE A GOOD SIGN OF US WILLINGNESS TO ADVANCE THE RELATIONSHIP, HE ADDED. HE PLEDGED THAT VIETNAM WAS PREPARED TO RATIFY THE BTA AFTER THE US CONGRESS HAD DONE SO. HE SAID THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD SUBMITTED THE BTA TO THE STATE PRESIDENT, WHILE RELEVANT ECONOMIC AGENCIES WERE ALREADY IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING TO IMPLEMENT ITS TERMS. HE ASKED FOR THE SENATOR'S SUPPORT FOR ASSISTANCE ON THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BTA, SUCH AS WITH THE JOINT COMMITTEE.

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111. (SBU) SENATOR HOLLINGS PROMISED FULL COOPERATION ON BTA RATIFICATION, PREDICTING NO PROBLEMS IN EITHER THE SENATE FINANCE OR COMMERCE COMMITTEES. HE SAID THAT THERE WOULD BE NO AMENDMENTS ON THE SENATE SIDE, ALTHOUGH THERE APPEAR TO BE SOME EFFORT TO ATTACH SOME ON THE HOUSE SIDE REGARDING FREEDOM OF RELIGION. HE PROMISED TO REPORT TO THEM THAT VIETNAM DOES HAVE FREEDOM OF RELIGION, SINCE HE WOULD BE ABLE TO ATTEND A CATHOLIC MASS LATER THAT DAY IN HANOI.

112. (SBU) CHAIRMAN TAI EXPRESSED A HOPE FOR STRONGER LINKS BETWEEN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND CONGRESS, AS WELL AS FOR FURTHER SHARING OF EXPERIENCES WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A

LEGAL SYSTEM. HE NOTED FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS ON THE NUMBER OF TRIPS TO THE US BY NA MEMBERS, BUT WELCOMED US CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATIONS TO VISIT VIETNAM.

13. (U) CODEL HOLLINGS DID NOT HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CLEAR THIS CABLE BEFORE DEPARTURE. HARTER

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